

“Handling the Truth with Integrity”

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They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth.
Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?
Mark 12:14

Does it seem to you that America is suffering under the weight of too many politicians and too few statesmen? It seems that way to me. No matter what the issue, too many of those who are in leadership place their own political fortunes and ambitions ahead of principle and the public good. The landscape seems dominated by the pursuit and protection of power and influence at the expense of principle and the people they are called to serve.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the exact opposite of that. Although the words of the text above are the quote of His enemies, they reveal that these enemies understood the Lord's commitment to integrity. In fact, they understood it so well that they tried to use it against Him. This back-handed compliment is actually a great testimony to the Lord's character—"we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth." Their intent was not to pay respect, but to flatter Christ and force Him to answer a very difficult question that would either enrage the Romans or discredit Him with the crowds. But the fact of Christ's integrity (and their reminder of it) is the basis for trying to "pin Him down" with this question.

What a great tribute it would be for those in leadership of any kind (political, pastoral, educational) to be described like this! Sadly, our day seems designed to encourage, if not demand, leaders that "play" to their constituencies rather than be "truthful and defer to no one." Leaders in the Lord's work should learn from the political mess in our country and the example of our Lord. We don't need ministerial politicians; we need pastoral statesmen! God has entrusted pastors with the task of "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). A few verses earlier, Paul described the pastor as "God's steward" (v. 7). Since a steward doesn't own the truth or the church, he must be very careful to not play games with either—he must be faithful to the Owner's desires and commands (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2).

Our desire at DBTS is to train men who will be leaders with Christlike integrity for whom the truth matters more than popularity or political power and influence. Practically, this is, from my perspective, the great need of the day. Ultimately, it is the only path that matters and that will stand the true test—not enrollment numbers, church size, or name recognition, but the Judgment Seat of Christ. Ministerial politics may work in the short run, but wood, hay, and stubble will go up in smoke. The path which passes the test of fire may not always be popular, but pastoral statesmen are not in the ministry for popularity, they are in it to do the will of the Master, to care for His sheep, and to fulfill His commission.